

Haftarah of Ki Thisa – 1 Kings 18:1-39
chantable English version by Len Fellman
based on the translations of

Aryeh Kaplan, the Stone Edition Tanach, New King James Bible and The Jerusalem Bible

18:1 It happened after many days: the word of YHWH came to Elijah in the third year, saying:

“Go, and appear before Ahab, and I will send down rain on the face of the earth.”

2 [So he set out]: Elijah went to present himself before Ahab. [At this time the famine] [was severe in Samaria].

3 Then called Ahab for Obadiah, who was in charge of the household. [Now Obadiah] [held in reverence] YHWH, exceedingly.

4 When the prophets were being cut off by Jezebel—they were butchered, the prophets of YHWH;
then took Obadiah a hundred [of the prophets], [and he hid them] fifty at a time in a cave, [and he provided them] with food and water.

5 And said Ahab this to Obadiah: “Go into the land, to all the springs of water [and to] all of the streams.

Perhaps [we may find] [some amount of grain] to keep alive the horses and mules, so we won’t need to kill any livestock.

6 They divided [between themselves] the land [to go through all of it].

Now Ahab went one way by himself, [while Obadiah] went another way by himself.

7 [When he went]—Obadiah—[on his way], behold: Elijah [met up with him].

[Obadiah recognized him], and fell on his face. [He enquired]: “Is it you, my lord Elijah?”

8 Elijah answered him, “It is I. [Go therefore] and tell your master, ‘Behold, Elijah is here.’”

9 Obadiah said, “How have I sinned, [that you do this thing]: [which is to deliver] [me, your servant] into the hand of Ahab, to cause my death?

10 [As God lives] | YHWH, [the One who is your God]—there is no nation or kingdom
[of which it can be said]: [there had not been sent] my master there to seek you, and when they said, ‘[He is not here]’,
[he made them swear]—that kingdom or nation—that truly they had not found you.

11 And now you say to me [that I should go] and tell my master, ‘here is Elijah’.

12 [And it will happen] [just as soon as] I [am gone from you], the spirit of YHWH [will carry you] to a place I don’t know. When I come
[to report] [this to Ahab], he will not find you, [and he will kill me], [even though I your servant] has feared YHWH [from my youth].

18:13 [Was it not reported] to my lord, that which I did when they were slaughtered by Jezebel—they, the prophets of YHWH?
 [How it was I hid]—of the prophets of YHWH—one [hundred men],
 [fifty at a time]—fifty men [in each cave], and I provided them with bread and water.
 14 And now you say to me [that I should go] and tell my master, ‘here is Elijah’, [and he will kill me].”
 15 And replied Elijah, “[As God lives]—YHWH of Hosts, the One of whom I stand before Him, surely this day, I will appear before your master.”
 16 [And so he went]—[Obadiah went off] to find Ahab, [and he told him]. Then went out Ahab, to meet Elijah.
 17 [And it was], when Ahab saw him—[when he saw Elijah]—that spoke up Ahab, [saying to him]: “Is it you, O troubler of Israel?”
 18 [And Elijah answered], “[It is not I] who have troubled Israel, but rather you, and the house of your father,
 by forsaking the commandments of YHWH, and going after the Baals.
 19 [Now therefore], [send for] and gather [unto me] [all of Israel] on Mount Carmel,
 along with the prophets of Baal, [all four] [hundred and fifty], the prophets of Asherah, [all four hundred], [they who eat] at the table of Jezebel.”
 20 Thus called Ahab, all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets, on Mount Carmel.
 21 Then drew close Elijah [to all of the people] and said, “[For how long] [will you dance] between two opinions?
 If YHWH is God, then follow Him, but if Baal, follow him. [There was no answer] [from the people]: [they spoke to him] not one word.
 22 Then spoke Elijah to the people: “[I am the only one] [who still remains] [as a prophet] of YHWH—I alone;
 but the prophets of Baal are four hundred fifty men.
 23 [Let them give to us] [two bulls]—[a pair of bullucks]. Let them choose [for themselves] one of the bullocks [and cut it into pieces],
 [and lay it] [on top of] the wood, [but let no fire] [be applied] to it.
 [I in turn] [will prepare] [the bullock—the one that remains]—[and place it] [on top of] the wood, [but let no fire] be applied to it.
 24 [You shall then call out] in the name [of your god], and I will call [on the name YHWH],
 [and it will be] [that that God] who answers with fire: [He is God] indeed.”
 [And they replied]—[all of the people] responded—“It is well spoken.”

18:25 Then said Elijah to [the prophets of Baal], “Choose for yourselves a bulluck—one bull—and prepare yours first, since you are many, and call on the name of your god. But let fire not be applied to it.”

26 [They proceeded to take] the bull which was [given to them], [and prepared it]. They called out [to the name of Baal] from morning until noontime, crying, “O Baal, please answer us”, but there was no voice, there was no answer, [and they did their halting dance] on the altar, which Elijah made.

27 When it got to be midday, [he began to scoff] at them—[Elijah mocked them], saying, “Call out [in a loud voice], since a god he is. [He is meditating], [or preoccupied], [or relieving himself], [or has gone on a journey]. [Or perhaps] he is sleeping [and must be woken up].”

28 [So they cried out] in a voice quite loud, [and they cut themselves] [as was their custom], using swords and using spears, [until the blood gushed out] upon them.

29 And it was [when they got past] [the noon hour], [they continued to prophesy] [until the time] of the offering at *minchah*. [There was neither voice nor answer—no attention paid to them.]

30 Then said Elijah to all the people, “Come close to me”. And all the people came closer [to him]. [He then repaired] the altar of YHWH [which had been thrown down].

31 [He then took]—[Elijah then picked up] two and ten stones: [twelve being the number] of the tribes [of the sons of Jacob], [they being the ones] of whom [the word of YHWH] [came to them] saying, “Israel shall be your name”.

32 [Elijah then built] [with the stones] an altar in the name of YHWH.

[He then] [made a trench] with enough space for two measures of seed [all around] the altar.

33 He arranged the wood, and cut up the bull, [placing the pieces] [upon the wood].

34 [And he then said this]: “Fill up four jars with water, pour it on the burnt offering, [and upon the wood].”

He said, “[Do it a second time],” and they did so. He said, “Do it a third time,” [and so they did].

35 There went the water [all around] the altar. Even the trench [filled with water].

18:36 [And it happened] | at the time [of the *minchah* offering], [he approached]—[*Eliyahu ha Navi*]—[and he spoke these words]:
 “YHWH, God of Abraham, of Isaac and Israel, [this day] [let it become known]
 [that you indeed] [truly are God] in Israel, and I am your servant.
 By your word I accomplished all the things we have seen here.
 37 Answer me, YHWH, do hear me, [that it be known] by the people here that You YHWH are God,
 [and that You] have turned back again [their hearts].
 38 Then descended [the fire of YHWH] and consumed the burnt offering and the wood; also the stones, even the dust.
 [The water in the trench], [the fire licked right up].
 39 [When they saw it]—all the people, they fell on their faces.
 And they cried, “YHWH—He is God. [end melody] YHWH—He is surely God.”

Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some “poetic licence”, and some willingness on the part of the listener to be “carried” by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these “transtropilations” are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a “window” into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. “cut a covenant”) to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 “beam above the door” rather than “lintel”) to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between “literalness” and “listenable-ness”. A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh or yetiv kadma or pashta geresh gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana “lean toward” the words they “conjoin” to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, geresh, gershayim, and telisha gedola “lean away” from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* “rivi'i” melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the “grey bracket” device, I indicate pairs of tropes by “wrapping them around” the phrase which have the combined melody:

mercha/tipcha	kadma/geresh (<i>or</i> : azla, etc.)	mercha siluk
(Renew our days)	(She weeps bitterly).	(a fire-offering to God)

Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don’t strictly match the Hebrew. I also “pad” some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the *leyner*’s cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g’dola* (ר), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the musical phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalshelet*.)

“*Metigah-zakef*” is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

[Take heed—take care for yourself]

In some trope systems (viz. cantor Moshe Haschel in “Navigating the Bible II”) this is given a distinctive melody—I add extra syllables to fill out the musical phrase (as in “take care” in this example). Haschel’s system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don’t write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the *leyner* can choose to pronounce it as “*God*” or “*Adonai*”.

Warning on the Hebrew text: The text I use for the English trope system is from Aryeh Kaplan; the Hebrew text I display is from Wikisource. Occasionally (but rarely) a phrase will use different tropes in the two systems.

The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:

Aryeh Kaplan, ‘The Living Torah’ (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)
Richard Elliott Friedman, ‘The Bible With Sources Revealed’ (2003)
Everett Fox, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (1997)
The Stone Edition ‘Tanach’ (1996)
JPS ‘Hebrew-English Tanach’, (2nd Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, ‘Notes on the New Translation of the Torah’ (1969)
Robert Alter, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (2004)
Commentaries in the ‘Anchor Bible’ series
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)
The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)
The New King James Bible (1982)